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- ART. VI. — 1. *The History of England from the Accession of James the Second.* By THOMAS BABINGTON MACAULAY. London : Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans. 1849 – 55. 4 vols. 8vo.
2. *The Same.* [A new Edition, Revised and Corrected.] London : Longman, Brown, Green, Longmans, and Roberts. 1858. 7 vols. Post 8vo.
3. *The History of England from the Accession of James the Second.* By LORD MACAULAY. Volume V. Edited by his Sister, Lady Trevelyan. London : Longman, Green, Longman, and Roberts. 1861. 8vo.

THE position which Lord Macaulay holds in English literature requires from this journal a more careful examination of his writings than has yet been bestowed on them in our pages. It is our intention, however, in this article, to confine our remarks to his character as an historian. As an essayist, his pre-eminence will not be denied by any one whose opinion is worthy of respectful notice; and he may almost be regarded as the new creator of a department of literature which he adorned with a genius unrivalled by any writer of periodical essays from the age of Addison to our own time. As a poet his rank is equally well established. It is true that the range of his poetical powers is not great; but within that range his merits are incontestable, and no similar productions in our language are superior to the “Lays of Ancient Rome” and two or three of his martial ballads. As an orator he was always eloquent and persuasive; and his best speeches are among the ablest, as they are certainly the most brilliant, that have been delivered in Parliament since the death of Canning. As an historian his fame is of more recent date; and in spite of the unexampled popularity of his “History of England,” his labors have not escaped severe criticism. The work is, indeed, only a mere fragment of the comprehensive plan which he formed while a young man, and cherished, through all the vicissitudes of political life, nearly to the close of his career. Enough of the original design, however, was completed to enable us to form some estimate of the worth of his historical theories, of

the nature and extent of his qualifications for the proposed task, and of the degree of success with which he could have executed it. Still every student of history must experience a feeling of regret that Lord Macaulay did not live long enough to finish his account of the reign of William III., and to carry his narrative through the memorable period of Anne,—to paint the literary glories of that magnificent epoch, and to set over against them the evidences of its moral and political degradation. Here the historian would have found an ample field for the most various exercise of his powers. The complicated intrigues of this period would have demanded his most searching analysis for their satisfactory elucidation; the increasing copiousness of his materials would have required all his skill in generalization to fuse them into an harmonious narrative; the men of letters whose names illustrated the reign of Anne with a splendor never before witnessed in England, except in the time of Elizabeth, would have taxed in an equal degree his skill in the portraiture of character; and the campaigns of Marlborough would have afforded him a fit occasion for presenting many passages of animated and picturesque description. But we need not indulge in unavailing regrets at the loss which historical literature suffered by the death of Lord Macaulay; and it is much more in accordance with our purpose to consider what he accomplished, than to lament the incompleteness of his fame. Under the more favorable circumstances of continued health and freedom from public cares, he might have achieved much more; but enough was done to form an imperishable monument to his memory, and to establish his place among the greatest historians of modern times.

No man ever had a loftier conception of the duties and responsibilities of an historian, or one which demands a more intimate blending of qualities rarely united. In an essay written before he was thirty years old, he placed on record his ideal of historic excellence; and when he began to compose his History he kept the same standard constantly in view. "A perfect historian," he said, "must possess an imagination sufficiently powerful to make his narrative affecting and picturesque. Yet he must control it so absolutely as to content himself with the materials which he finds, and to refrain from

supplying deficiencies by additions of his own. He must be a profound and ingenious reasoner. Yet he must possess sufficient self-command to abstain from casting his facts in the mould of his hypothesis." This union of reason and imagination constitutes in Lord Macaulay's theory the first and most essential qualification of an historian. He who aspires to an honorable place in this department of letters must be able, not only to trace the connection of cause and effect, and to exhibit the influence of laws, institutions, and systems of foreign and domestic policy on national progress, but also be able to paint social manners and customs with such fidelity that the reader will bear away from the historian's pages as vivid an impression of any period as he derives from the representations of the historical novelist. In other words, what is called the philosophy of history and historical narration in its highest form must be harmoniously combined in order to place an historian in the first rank. He must unite the logical acuteness of Hallam with the pictorial power of Sir Walter Scott. He must convince the understanding, while he leads captive the imagination.

Another qualification of an historian to which Lord Macaulay attached much importance, is the ability to portray the characters of individual actors, as well as to describe men in their aggregate capacity. More than any of his predecessors he recognized the manifold relations existing between history and biography, and perceived the advantages which an historian would possess who should enrich his narrative with a series of carefully drawn portraits of its principal personages. Not only would such a writer import into his work the personal interest which constitutes the great charm of biography, but he would render it far more instructive, by unfolding the intimate connection between personal character and the legislative measures and martial achievements by which the progress of nations is affected. It is to this characteristic, indeed, as much perhaps as to any other quality, that the popularity of Lord Macaulay's History is to be ascribed; and his frequent introduction of these personal sketches shows how much importance he attached to them.

Copiousness of information is another qualification which

holds a very important place in his theory. The historian, as he thought, should neglect no source of information, however uninviting or contemptible; he should not only study printed books and manuscript authorities, but should also visit the localities which he may have occasion to describe, and trace out on the spot the perishing vestiges of tradition; he should make himself familiar with every department of literature which can by any possibility throw light on his subject; and he should gather up in his omnivorous mind even the most trivial details, — not to be reproduced in his narrative, but as materials from which the representative facts are to be selected. The extent of Lord Macaulay's own researches curiously illustrates his theory, while it also shows the conscientious fidelity with which he pursued his investigations. Numerous instances of his diligence in the search for new materials might be cited; but it is perhaps nowhere better shown than by an incidental remark in one of his foot-notes. "There is," he writes, "a noble, and, I suppose, unique collection of the newspapers of William's reign in the British Museum. I have turned over every page of that collection."

Both in his description of the perfect historian and in his own practice, Lord Macaulay gave great prominence to the homely virtue of honesty. The perfect historian, he says, "relates no fact, he attributes no expression to his characters, which is not authenticated by sufficient testimony." He must love truth more than he loves party; and, though it is his privilege and his duty so to arrange incidents as to place in the strongest and clearest light the views which he designs to enforce, he must not give a false coloring to any fact, nor seek in any way to confound essential distinctions. He must examine every authority with the single desire of ascertaining its exact weight and of determining its real bearing, uninfluenced by the wish to confirm or refute a particular theory. He must render equal justice to every person whose actions he describes, irrespective of the party to which such person belonged, or of the opinions which he entertained. He must not shield from just censure any man, however illustrious his fame, or however splendid the record of his public services. The temptation to gloss over some doubtful transaction in

which a favorite character was concerned will be often severely felt, and it is one to which historians, as well as biographers, are prone to yield ; but it will be stoutly resisted by the historian who loves truth for its own sake, and seeks only to describe things as they actually were. On the other hand, such an historian will visit no unjust judgment on the persons and the parties to whose principles he is in general opposed. He will state his opinions of both men and measures strongly and clearly ; but he will take care that those opinions are the result of conviction, and that they are fairly deduced from the evidence before him. He will welcome friendly criticism on his labors ; and whenever he is satisfied that he has committed an error, he will cheerfully make the necessary correction. But he will not yield to a senseless clamor because it is raised by a multitude of voices, nor give up a well-founded opinion merely because it is unpopular. He will look to foreign nations and future ages for his justification.

These four qualifications form the most essential elements in the character of a great historian, not only as Lord Macaulay described it in early life, but as he also endeavored to show by his own example in later years. To the first three he gave a far greater prominence, both in theory and in practice, than any of his predecessors. In the description of a perfect historian he dwelt upon them with even more than his wonted eloquence ; and in his own *History* he seems to have constantly recognized their importance. But he did not neglect or undervalue other qualities ; and while he endeavored to present a correct picture of the period over which his narrative extends, he constantly sought to make the lessons which it was designed to teach more impressive and more useful, by a reference to events within the personal knowledge of his readers. Many of the most brilliant passages in each of his volumes appear to have been inspired by recent transactions quite as much as by the events of which he is speaking ; and, though there is great danger in the too frequent reference to contemporary history, it cannot be doubted that Lord Macaulay regarded the ability to draw just inferences from the experience of former generations as one of the most important qualifications of an historian.

To his theory respecting the importance of these qualifications two objections may be urged, — first, that no man possesses the knowledge or ability requisite for writing history according to so ample a scale, and secondly, that life is too short for any one to acquire an adequate knowledge of the past, if every historical work is to be composed with such minuteness of detail. In considering these objections, we shall reverse the order in which they are here stated, because the answer to be given to the first must depend very much on the validity of the second. If it is true that history ought not to be written according to Lord Macaulay's theory, it is certainly unnecessary to consider whether history can be so written. In entering on the discussion of this question, it is important to observe, that if History is, in the fine phrase of Lord Bolingbroke, "Philosophy teaching by examples," the worth of the instruction to be derived from her teachings will be exactly in proportion to the fidelity with which every circumstance affecting the course of events is narrated, and all the relations which the various actors bore to one another and to the state are exhibited. It must be obvious, therefore, that it is better to understand thoroughly the history of one nation, or of a brief period, than to have only a general knowledge of the history of several nations and many centuries. The man who is profoundly acquainted with Lord Macaulay's History, for instance, or with Mr. Motley's last two volumes, will be a wiser and a better-instructed man than one who has read a score of such compilations as Rollin's "Ancient History," and the like; for he will have the knowledge of a contemporary, without sharing the prejudices which vitiate judgments formed amid the stress of events. Even more than this: he will often understand the true position of affairs better than the actors themselves; he will be equally familiar with the secrets of both parties, and will see precisely what influences operated on every prominent person, and how far the result of any series of measures was affected by personal character, or by circumstances over which the actors themselves had no control.

Superficial knowledge is without doubt much better than entire ignorance. But if reliance on such knowledge in any

department of literature is to be deprecated, surely it is in that department in which the transactions of the past are recorded for the instruction of the present and the guidance of the future. Otherwise, history is indeed no better than an old almanac. A barren record of names and dates, for example, is utterly worthless, except so far as it may be used to exercise the memory. In order that any history shall be instructive, it must be written in a philosophical spirit; it must be interesting; and it must be based on an intimate acquaintance with every part of the field designed to be covered: it must not only exhibit to us the life of the court and the camp, and record the measures adopted in the cabinet and the laws enacted in the senate, but it must also describe the manners, habits, and customs of every class of the population, and present a picture which shall be minute and exact in all its details, while it shall leave on the mind of the student the impression of perfect artistic unity, rather than of a series of disconnected and independent sketches. In a word, the historian must aim to fill out and realize that ideal standard of historic excellence which Lord Macaulay kept constantly in view, and of which, we may add, he furnishes the best illustration.

Having shown, as we believe, that this objection to Lord Macaulay's theory is without any solid foundation, we need not spend much time in attempting to disprove the first allegation; for if his theory is sound in other respects, the difficulty of meeting its requirements forms no valid objection. The highest excellence is always difficult of attainment, and sometimes impossible; but the duty of striving after it remains the same in either case, and the higher the standard, the greater will be the excellence attained. As Lord Macaulay justly observes, "we shall sooner see another Shakespeare or another Homer" than an historian who fully meets the requirements of his ideal standard; but it is not the less true, that the more nearly an historian meets those requirements, the more praiseworthy will be his labors. The more deeply he is impressed with a sense of his duties and responsibilities, the more persistently will he study his authorities, the more widely will he push his investigations, the more care-

fully will he construct his narrative, and therefore the more valuable will be the results presented to his readers.

That Lord Macaulay possessed peculiar qualifications for the task which he assumed, and that he entered on its performance under very advantageous circumstances, will be generally conceded, even by those who are most inclined to speak disparagingly of his labors. He had an intimate acquaintance with every part of English history, and with nearly every department of English literature; he was a good classical scholar, according to the large requirements of the English system of university instruction, and was familiar with the great writers of Greece and Rome; he had a critical knowledge of the literatures of France and Italy, and was thoroughly conversant with the history of those countries; and every fact which he had ever heard or read was stored up in a singularly retentive memory, and was available for instant use. He had a strong and healthy imagination, by the aid of which he reproduced to his own mind the very life of past ages, and placed before his readers a series of pictures more sharply drawn and more brilliantly colored than any which can be found elsewhere in the historical literature of England. He had great skill in the delineation of character, and by a few bold touches he could sketch a portrait which would always be remembered for its clearness of outline and its marvellous accuracy of expression. His incorruptible integrity and his honesty of purpose were above question, and no candid person can doubt that he was more desirous of vindicating the truth of history, than of promoting his own interests, or of defending the party to which he was so warmly attached. In his first letter to the Bishop of Exeter, in reference to certain strictures of that veteran controversialist, he distinctly avows his wish to profit by the criticism of others. "I have undertaken a task," he says, "which makes it necessary for me to treat of many subjects with which it is impossible that one man should be more than superficially acquainted, — law, divinity, military affairs, maritime affairs, trade, finance, manufactures, letters, arts, sciences. It would therefore be the height of folly and arrogance in me to receive ungraciously suggestions offered in a friendly spirit, by persons who have studied pro-

foundly branches of knowledge to which I have been able to give only a passing attention. I should not, I assure you, feel at all mortified or humbled at being compelled to own that I had been set right by an able and learned prelate on a question of ecclesiastical history." In another place he observes: "I do not, I must own, feel satisfied that the language which I have used requires any modification. But if reading and reflection should lead me to a different opinion, false shame shall not prevent me from making a public retraction." His convictions were strong and deeply rooted, and were expressed with a positiveness of statement which left no doubt as to his opinions on every question which he had occasion to discuss. Though he was by birth and education a Whig, and was one of the most impassioned advocates of Parliamentary Reform during the great struggle of 1831, he was conservative in his habits of thought; and this characteristic was not among the least of his qualifications as the historian of England. In his eyes, for example, the great merit to be ascribed to the leaders in the Revolution of 1688 is, not that they sought to extend the privileges of Parliament or to gain new liberties for the people, but that they aimed to prevent the growth of the regal power. "It is because we had a preserving revolution in the seventeenth century," he says in a striking passage at the close of his second volume, "that we have not had a destroying revolution in the nineteenth." His style was rich, copious, and animated, moving onward in a rapid flow of short, crisp sentences, seldom widening into long paragraphs or branching off to follow new trains of thought. There is apparent, indeed, a marked fondness for antithetical forms of expression; but with this exception his style, both as an essayist and as an historian, has scarcely any conspicuous fault, and it is always lucid and exact.

Beside these qualifications, which may be traced partly to the original structure of his mind and partly to education, Lord Macaulay possessed another advantage in his familiarity with history as it is formed in the legislative assembly, the cabinet council, and the halls of justice, as well as with history as it is written in books. He had been for many years a member of Parliament, and had taken a prominent part in

the debates, both as a minister and in Opposition ; he had twice had a seat in the Cabinet ; and he had also been intrusted with important judicial functions in that vast Indian empire which even Canning deemed a fit field for the exercise of a comprehensive statesmanship. This various experience in public life had combined with his studious habits, his tenacious memory, and his long practice as a writer, to qualify him beyond most persons for the task which he assumed in the full vigor of his intellectual powers, and after many years of preparation.

When he began his labors, it was his " purpose to write the history of England from the accession of James II. down to a time within the memory of men still living." But this design must have been early relinquished ; and when the pen dropped from his hand he had not quite completed his narrative to the death of William. This period of seventeen years forms one of the most important epochs in modern history, and is, indeed, the turning point in the progress of English liberty. It includes the short and turbulent reign of James ; the unsuccessful attempt to restore the Papal supremacy in England, and to establish the uncontrolled will of the sovereign as the ultimate source of all authority in the government ; Monmouth's ill-planned rebellion ; the Revolution of 1688 ; the subjugation of Ireland ; the incorporation of the East-India Company ; the Continental wars of William ; and the restoration of England to her former rank among nations. But to this picture there is a reverse ; and it must be conceded that never before had public morality in England been at so low an ebb, and that never since has there been such an utter disregard of all the obligations of patriotism and common honesty. With few exceptions, every Englishman in public life was anxious to serve two masters,—to stand well with the king on the throne, and at the same time to avoid giving offence to the king over the water. Men swore allegiance to William, while they betrayed the state secrets to James. Yet in the midst of this prostration of public morality, by the genius of one man, born and reared on a foreign soil, England was saved from the dangers which threatened her ; some of the greatest reforms in the governmental system were effected ; and many

of the enterprises were originated, and many of the laws enacted, to which her present commercial prosperity is owing.

In tracing the history of this period Lord Macaulay has achieved a signal triumph, and has abundantly shown the soundness of the theory according to which his book is written. No work in any department of literature was ever read with so much avidity at its publication, and the demand for it is still unsatisfied. "We have cheated our mind of its usual food, and our body of its usual rest," said one writer, in speaking of the first two volumes, "in order to grasp, by one mental effort, the great truths which they teach, and imbibe the noble lessons which they convey." Nor was this feeling confined to one class or to one locality. Wherever the English language is spoken, the History found eager readers, and enthusiastic admirers, who joined in pronouncing it not less interesting than the last new work of Thackeray or Dickens, while its profound philosophy carried conviction to nearly every mind. "It is as fluent and as much colored as Livy," said Lord Jeffrey, in a letter to his son-in-law, Mr. Empson, after reading the first chapter; "as close and coherent as Thucydides, with far more real condensation and a larger thoughtfulness than either; and quite free from the laconisms and sarcasms and epigrams of Tacitus. I do not know that I ever read anything so good as the first forty pages, — so clear, comprehensive, and concise, so pregnant with deep thought, so suggestive of great views and grand and memorable distinctions." If the third and fourth volumes were received with fewer demonstrations of applause, it was not because they were in any degree inferior to the previous volumes, but because the writer's method had become familiar to his readers, and no longer had the charm of novelty. The last volume is a mere fragment; and, though it includes many passages of brilliant description and acute reasoning, it does not afford an adequate standard by which to measure the historian's powers. But taking the five volumes together, as an incomplete history of the reigns of James II. and William III., it will be admitted that they form one of the most fascinating narratives in our language.*

* In one of his communications to the New York Ledger, Mr. Everett says: "The first English edition bears date 1849, and in April I was informed by an in-

The narrative portions of Lord Macaulay's History are indeed worthy of the highest praise. The representative facts have been wisely selected and harmoniously grouped, the connection of events is well sustained, and there is seldom any disproportion of parts. The narrative is at once clear, rapid, and minute; and there are many passages, such as the account of the trial of the seven bishops, in which it seems impossible to suggest any alteration. Indeed, whenever description is combined with narrative, the superiority of Lord Macaulay over most, if not over all, of his predecessors is at once shown. His battle-pieces in particular have wonderful clearness and vigor; and there is nothing of the kind better than the account of the siege of Londonderry, or the descriptions of the battles of Sedgemoor, Killiecrankie, and the Boyne. It is somewhat remarkable, that in this respect he is not behind the best of the military historians, and that he describes a military movement nearly as well as he does a debate in Parliament.

It is this unflagging interest of the narrative which more than any other characteristic has given popularity to Lord Macaulay's work; but in bestowing admiration on this quality, we must not overlook other qualities which it exhibits in a not less remarkable degree. Never before was a greater array of learning brought to the illustration of a single period, or a more profound philosophy employed to unfold the relations of cause and effect in practical politics, and never were the lessons of national experience taught with a more impressive eloquence. No part of the subject has been left untouched, and there is no part which has not been placed in a clearer light than that in which it had previously stood. The first two chapters contain a luminous and masterly survey of the principal events in English history from the first mention of the island to the death of Charles II. The famous third chapter has made the

telligent bookseller that more copies of the various editions were selling in this country than of any work in the language, except school-books and books of devotion." During the year 1860 between four and five thousand copies of each of the first four volumes were sold in this city by a single publishing house. It is probable that in that year not less than fifteen thousand copies of the History as far as completed were sold in the United States. We have no information as to the number of copies sold in England; but it is known to have been very large.

England over which Charles reigned wellnigh as familiar to us as the England of our own time. The remaining portions of the first two volumes "recount the errors which in a few months alienated a loyal gentry and priesthood from the House of Stuart," and "trace the course of that revolution which terminated the long struggle between" the sovereigns of England and their Parliaments, "and bound up together the rights of the people and the title of the reigning dynasty." The tenth chapter in particular is executed with consummate ability, and is worthy of especial notice for its admirable exposition of the opinions and policy of the leading politicians in the Convention Parliament. The last three volumes show how order was re-established in England, how Ireland was subjugated and Scotland was tranquillized, and how the foreign policy of William checked the growth of French power and influence, and made England once more feared and respected abroad. Here Lord Macaulay entered on a wider field than he had occupied in the earlier volumes, his subject expanded into wider and more complicated relations, and the boundless extent of his information and the strong grasp of his intellect were still more conspicuously shown.

The central figure on his canvas is William III. The first mention of William's name, while he was only Prince of Orange, is made the occasion of an elaborate delineation of his character; and on the record of his personal actions the historian lavishes all the wealth of his imagination and all his dramatic skill to give brilliancy and point to the narrative. By no other writer have that great, calm intellect, that cold and reserved manner, and that indomitable will, been so eloquently described, or such ample justice been rendered to that profound and far-sighted policy. William stands before us clearly and sharply defined, bold, fearless, magnanimous, towering above his contemporaries not more by the vigor of his intellect than by his masculine virtues. He is evidently an object of strong and hearty admiration to the historian; and if any exception is to be taken to the portrait of the Deliverer here presented, it is that, while his great qualities have been painted with the hand of a master, his less praiseworthy actions have not been marked by a sufficiently strong repro-

bation. Mary is also a favorite with the historian, and her character has been drawn with scarcely less power than is exhibited in the portrait of her husband. Her devotion to him, her disinterested love of country, and the purity of her motives in every public or private act, are all described with a fidelity of statement and a warmth of eulogy which show how profound and how sincere was Lord Macaulay's admiration of her. Equally faithful and exact in all its details, but far less pleasing, is the masterly sketch of the false, pusillanimous, and bigoted James, in all points the very opposite of William and Mary. Admirable as are the portraits of this mean-spirited fugitive drawn by Mackintosh, Hallam, and other Whig historians, we know no other history from which so vivid and so just an impression of his character may be gathered. Of the other prominent persons with whose portraits Lord Macaulay has enriched his History, every reader will recall with especial satisfaction the sketches of Halifax, Somers, Danby, Nottingham, Shrewsbury, Sunderland, and Charles Montague, of Portland, Ginkell, and Schomberg, of Walker, the heroic defender of Londonderry, of Sarsfield, and of Peter the Great.

In his disquisitions we have still further evidence of the extent and variety of Lord Macaulay's powers. They seem to rise naturally out of the course of the narrative; but, as we have already suggested, many of them were doubtless inspired by the historian's interest in passing events. A remarkable instance of the tendency of his mind thus to connect the past and the present will occur to every one in the elaborate discussion as to the policy of maintaining standing armies with which the fifth volume opens. The Cabinet minister and the Parliamentary orator reappear in the historian. The same cogency of argument, however, is equally well shown in discussions more closely connected with the subject immediately before him. They are judiciously blended with the narrative, and are not less remarkable for their comprehensiveness of view and profoundness of criticism, than for their copiousness of illustration.

It is not to be denied, however, that, in spite of these substantial merits of Lord Macaulay's History, a vague impression

exists in many minds that he is little better than a brilliant partisan ; and in some instances distinct charges, seriously affecting his character as an historian, have been preferred in respectable quarters. These charges, so far as they are worthy of notice, relate to the accuracy of his knowledge, to his impartiality, and to his honesty ; and they may all be resolved into seven specific allegations ; — namely, that he has misunderstood and misrepresented the character of Cranmer and the founders of the Established Church ; that he has drawn a false picture of the social position of the rural clergy in the time of Charles II. ; that he has libelled the Scotch Covenanters ; that he has caricatured the Highlanders of Scotland, and heaped unmerited obloquy on their leaders ; that he has indulged in unfounded strictures on the character of the Duke of Marlborough ; that he has endeavored to conceal the defects in the character of William, and to excuse some parts of the king's conduct which cannot be justly defended, and especially that he has given a false coloring to the well-authenticated facts respecting the massacre of Glencoe ; and, finally, that, having been convicted of a gross blunder in regard to William Penn, he persevered in statements which have no real foundation, and that consequently his portrait of Penn bears little or no resemblance to the original. These charges we propose now to examine in detail.

In this examination, we shall consider first the accusation based on his account of the character and public life of Penn, both because no other charge has been pressed so assiduously, and because there is no one which, if well founded, is so fatal to Lord Macaulay's reputation. If his adversaries have failed to make out a case here, it is fair to conclude that no other accusation of much importance can be established. No other point of attack offers such advantages to his critics, and they have used every effort which their ingenuity could suggest to make the attack successful. What is the result ?

Time, which seldom fails to soften the asperities of contemporary judgment, has wrought a great change in the popular estimate of Penn. By many persons in his own age he was regarded with distrust, as one who had sacrificed his integrity to the love of wealth and station, and had made himself a will-

ing tool in the hands of arbitrary power. But the lapse of years and the cooling of party strife have produced a strong reaction; and a much more favorable estimate of him has been almost universally accepted by more recent writers of every party than was common in his own lifetime. "Rival nations and hostile sects," as Lord Macaulay remarks, "have agreed in canonizing him. England is proud of his name. A great commonwealth beyond the Atlantic regards him with a reverence similar to that which the Athenians felt for Theæus and the Romans for Quirinus. The respectable society of which he was a member honors him as an apostle. By pious men of other persuasions he is generally regarded as a bright pattern of Christian virtue." To question the soundness of an opinion which had obtained such currency required no small degree of courage; and so experienced a critic as Lord Macaulay would scarcely have attempted to substitute a new view without carefully considering the whole ground, and thoroughly weighing the arguments by which his positions were to be defended. This responsibility he fully recognized; and there is no portion of his *History* more carefully elaborated than the parts relating to Penn.

His estimate of Penn is too well known to need reproduction here. It will be sufficient, therefore, for our present purpose to observe, that while he recognizes the eminent virtues which Penn often exhibited, both in public and private life,—his sense of religious obligations, his desire to promote the happiness of mankind, his emancipation from some of the prejudices of his contemporaries, his justice and humanity as a legislator, and his freedom from pecuniary corruption,—Lord Macaulay does not overlook other facts of equal importance in forming a correct judgment as to the claims of Penn to retain the position which he has long held in the popular favor. He reminds us that Penn was not a man of vigorous intellect, and could not withstand the voice of flattery and the blandishments of power; that he possessed little skill in reading character, and often became the dupe of abler and less scrupulous men; that, in order to secure a temporary success to one principle, he was sometimes impelled to sacrifice another principle not less important nor less worthy of constant

recognition ; and finally, "that he bore a chief part in some transactions condemned, not merely by the rigid code of the society to which he belonged, but by the general sense of all honest men."

The first of these transactions in which Penn is alleged to have taken part is the disgraceful affair of the maids of honor and the little girls of Taunton. The circumstances of this affair are now well known ; but it will be proper to cite the precise language used by Lord Macaulay. We shall merely remark, by way of explanation, that on the occasion of Monmouth's entrance into Taunton, not long before the battle of Sedgemoor, a standard, gorgeously decorated with the emblems of royal power, was presented to him by a train of school-girls, under the direction of their teacher. After the suppression of the rebellion, the maids of honor determined to take advantage of the circumstance, and to extort a considerable sum of money from the parents of these children.

"Already some of the girls who had presented the standard to Monmouth at Taunton," says the historian, "had cruelly expiated their offence. One of them had been thrown into a prison where an infectious malady was raging. She had sickened and died there. Another had presented herself at the bar before Jeffreys to beg for mercy. 'Take her, gaoler,' vociferated the Judge, with one of those frowns which had often struck terror into stouter hearts than hers. She burst into tears, drew her hood over her face, followed the gaoler out of court, fell ill of fright, and in a few hours was a corpse. Most of the young ladies, however, who had walked in the procession, were still alive. Some of them were under ten years of age. All had acted under the orders of their schoolmistress, without knowing that they were committing a crime. The queen's maids of honor asked the royal permission to wring money out of the parents of the poor children ; and the permission was granted. An order was sent down to Taunton that all these little girls should be seized and imprisoned. Sir Francis Warre of Hestercombe, the Tory member for Bridgewater, was requested to undertake the office of exacting the ransom. He was charged to declare in strong language that the maids of honor would not endure delay, that they were determined to prosecute to outlawry unless a reasonable sum were forthcoming, and that by a reasonable sum was meant seven thousand pounds. Warre excused himself from taking any part in a transaction so scandalous. The

maids of honor then requested William Penn to act for them; and Penn accepted the commission. Yet it should seem that a little of the pertinacious scrupulosity which he had often shown about taking off his hat would not have been altogether out of place on this occasion. He probably silenced the remonstrances of his conscience by repeating to himself that none of the money which he extorted would go into his own pocket; that if he refused to be the agent of the ladies they would find agents less humane; that by complying he should increase his influence at the court, and that his influence at the court had already enabled him, and might still enable him, to render great services to his oppressed brethren. The maids of honor were at last forced to content themselves with less than a third part of what they had demanded."

In confirmation of this statement, Lord Macaulay referred, among other authorities, to the correspondence between the Duke of Somerset and Sir Francis Warre, and to the following letter in the State-Paper Office.

"Whitehall, Feb. 13, 1685-6.

"MR. PENNE, —

"Her Majesty's Maids of Honour having acquainted me that they designe to employ you and Mr. Walden in making a composition with the Relations of the Maids of Taunton for the high Misdemeanour they have been guilty of, I do at their request hereby let you know that His Majesty has been pleased to give their Fines to the said Maids of Honour, and therefore recommend it to Mr. Walden and you to make the most advantageous composition you can in their behalfe.

"I am, Sir, your humble servant,

"SUNDERLAND."

This letter appears to have been first brought to light by Sir James Mackintosh, and is referred to by him in his "History of the Revolution of 1688," as a letter from "Lord Sunderland to William Penn." When that splendid fragment was given to the world, probably no one entertained the slightest doubt as to the correctness of this description of the letter; but since the publication of the first two volumes of Lord Macaulay's History it has been confidently asserted that the letter was not addressed to William Penn, but to a very obscure individual named George Penne. Of this man nothing is known beyond the fact, that for the sum of sixty-five pounds he bought a pardon for one Azariah Penny, the younger son of a dissenting minister, and that afterward he applied to the

government for permission to set up a lottery and license gambling-tables in the American Colonies. Yet on a mere conjecture that he is the person to whom Sunderland wrote rests the chief argument against the accuracy of Lord Macaulay's portrait of Penn, and on it two of his critics, Mr. Hepworth Dixon and Mr. John Paget, have not hesitated to base a charge of dishonesty. It is important, therefore, to examine the arguments which have been urged for and against the belief that William Penn was the agent employed in this transaction.*

In opposition to Lord Macaulay's view, it has been contended by Messrs. Dixon and Paget, that the name of the person to whom Sunderland's letter is addressed is spelled *Penne*, and that therefore this person cannot be William Penn; but it is scarcely possible to conceive of a less conclusive argument, or of one which more clearly shows the weakness of the case against the historian. As Lord Macaulay very justly observes, in an elaborate note first printed in the edition of his *History* published in 1858, no one who is familiar with the books and manuscripts of that period will attach much weight to such an argument as this.

"It is notorious," he says, "that a proper name was then thought to be well spelt if the sound were preserved. To go no further than the

* If we except Mr. Croker, of whom it was wittily said, on the appearance of his article in the *Quarterly Review*, that "he meant murder, but committed suicide," no one of Lord Macaulay's critics has been so sweeping in his animadversions as Mr. John Paget, the author of a small volume entitled an "Inquiry into the Charges brought by Lord Macaulay against William Penn," and of four articles in *Blackwood's Magazine*, all of which have been recently reprinted in a single volume, entitled "The New 'Examen,' or, an Inquiry into the Evidence relating to certain Passages in Lord Macaulay's History, concerning the Duke of Marlborough, the Massacre of Glencoe, the Highlands of Scotland, Viscount Dundee, William Penn." Of this writer we know nothing but what we gather from his book; but that little is sufficient. Though he makes loud professions of "honesty" in his Preface, we have never had occasion to deal with a less candid or a less trustworthy writer. A single passage from his first article may be cited, as showing the real spirit in which his book is written. "The love of Churchill and Sarah Jennings," he says, "seems to inspire Lord Macaulay with much the same feelings as those with which a certain personage, whom Dr. Johnson used to call 'the first Whig,' regarded the happiness of our first parents in the garden of Eden." Certainly no respectable writer would descend to such personal abuse as this; but we shall have abundant occasion to deal with Mr. Paget in the further course of our remarks.

persons who, in Penn's time, held the Great Seal, one of them is sometimes Hyde and sometimes Hide; another is Jefferies, Jeffries, Jeffereys, and Jeffreys; a third is Somers, Sommers, and Summers; a fourth is Wright and Wrighte; and a fifth is Cowper and Cooper. The Quaker's name was spelt in three ways. He, and his father the Admiral before him, invariably, as far as I have observed, spelt it Penn; but most people spelt it Pen; and there were some who adhered to the ancient form, Penne. For example, William the father is Penne in a letter from Disbrowe to Thurloe, dated on the 7th of December, 1654; and William the son is Penne in a news-letter of the 22nd of September, 1688, printed in the Ellis Correspondence. In Richard Ward's *Life and Letters of Henry More*, printed in 1710, the name of the Quaker will be found spelt in all the three ways, Penn in the Index, Pen in page 197, and Penne in page 311. The name is Penne in the Commission which the Admiral carried out with him on his expedition to the West Indies. Burchett, who became Secretary to the Admiralty soon after the Revolution, and remained in office long after the accession of the House of Hanover, always, in his *Naval History*, wrote the name Penne. Surely it cannot be thought strange that an old-fashioned spelling, in which the Secretary of the Admiralty persisted so late as 1720, should have been used at the office of the Secretary of State in 1686."

The attempt, therefore, to disprove Lord Macaulay's view by any argument based on the mere spelling of the name, must be pronounced a failure, and we are driven to a consideration of the probabilities of the case. Now, it is certain from the tenor of the letters of the Duke of Somerset to Sir Francis Warre, that the transaction was regarded as one of sufficient magnitude to require a person of character and influence to act as the representative of the maids of honor; and in the last of his letters the Duke of Somerset intimated to Sir Francis Warre, in clear and unequivocal language, that, if he would lend to the negotiation the countenance of his name, he might employ an inferior person to do the principal part of the business. Sir Francis either did not give an answer in writing, or it has not been preserved; but the family tradition is, that he refused to have anything to do with so scandalous a proceeding. Accordingly it became necessary to find a new agent; and two or three weeks afterward the Secretary of State wrote the letter to Mr. Penne. If that letter was ad-

dressed to George Penne, it is impossible to avoid the conclusion, that within this interval the maids of honor and their advisers had entirely changed their views, and that they no longer wished to employ an agent of personal and political influence. But no evidence has been adduced to show that such a change took place; and there is no valid reason for supposing that any change whatever could have occurred, either in the position of affairs or in the views of any of the parties. If it was desirable to have a well-known and influential agent when the Duke of Somerset wrote to Sir Francis Warre, it was not less desirable to have such an agent when the Earl of Sunderland wrote his letter; and if this was desirable at either date, George Penne was not such a person as either Somerset or Sunderland would have selected. A man who was never trusted with a hundred pounds, so far as we know, was not likely to be employed about an affair which involved the collection and disbursement of several thousand pounds. A man who was so obscure as to be almost never mentioned in contemporary documents was not likely to be asked by one of the king's principal Secretaries of State to take charge of a negotiation which was not thought by the Duke of Somerset to be below the dignity of a member of Parliament.

On the other hand, it is certain that William Penn was such a man as Sunderland would be likely to ask; and from his complaisant temper, he was likely to give a ready assent to such a proposition. He was, as Lord Macaulay remarks, "during the reign of James II. the most active and powerful solicitor about the court." He was known everywhere; he was rich; and as he had the king's ear, he was likely to be feared by the parents from whom money was to be extorted. While there is nothing in the letter, therefore, or in the character and position of George Penne, to lend probability to the supposition that he was the person addressed, all the circumstances of the case point conclusively to William Penn, and fully justify the assertion of Sir James Mackintosh that this letter was addressed to him, and the refusal of Lord Macaulay to withdraw the accusation based on it.*

* It was one of the peculiar advantages which Lord Macaulay enjoyed in the preparation of his History, that he was intrusted with the materials collected by

But this is not the only instance in respect to which Lord Macaulay is said to have dealt unfairly with Penn. Thus, in speaking of the efforts which were made to induce William Kiffin to exert his influence over the Baptists in support of the unconstitutional measures of James, the historian adds, that "Penn was employed in the work of seduction, but to no purpose." In answer to this, Mr. Dixon cites a few words from a passage in Kiffin's *Memoirs* which, as thus given, certainly imply that Penn was acting a friendly part in behalf of Kiffin rather than the part of a tempter. But we have rarely seen a more unfair use of an authority. The whole passage not only does not sustain Mr. Dixon's view, but it proves exactly the reverse, and fully confirms Lord Macaulay's accusation. It is in these words: "I used all the means I could to be excused, both by some lords near the king, and also by Sir Nicholas Butler and Mr. Penn. But it was all in vain; I was told that they knew I had an interest that might serve the king, and although they knew my sufferings were great, in cutting off my two grandchildren and losing their estates, yet it should be made up to me, both in their estates, and also in what honor or advantage I could reasonably desire for myself. But, I thank the Lord, these proffers were no snare to me."

Again, in the account which Lord Macaulay gives of Penn's connection with the affairs of Magdalene College, his critics have attempted to discover several errors of statement. But to each of these allegations he has given an unanswerable refutation in the additional notes to the edition of his *History* published in 1858. For instance, he says: "Penn had an interview with Hough and with some of the Fellows, and, after many professions of sympathy and friendship, began to

Sir James Mackintosh when the latter meditated a similar work. No one can read a page of either of the historical fragments of that great man without admiration for his learning, his eloquence, and the candor of his judgment, and without a feeling of profound regret that he left no finished work to bear adequate testimony to his splendid powers. Of the worth of the materials collected by him, Lord Macaulay says: "I have never seen, and I do not believe that there anywhere exists, within the same compass, so noble a collection of extracts from public and private archives. The judgment with which Sir James, in great masses of the rudest ore of history, selected what was valuable, and rejected what was worthless, can be fully appreciated only by one who has toiled after him in the same mine."

hint at a compromise." The latter part of this statement is denied, and, in support of the denial, an extract from Dr. Hough's letter is produced. But in this citation, as in the one just noticed, the whole paragraph bears a very different sense from that which necessarily attaches to the first half of it when taken alone. Dr. Hough writes: "I thank God, he did not offer any proposal by way of accommodation; only once, upon the mention of the Bishop of Oxford's indisposition, he said, smiling, 'If the Bishop of Oxford die, Dr. Hough may be made Bishop. What think you of that, gentlemen?'" Mr. Hepworth Dixon suppresses all after the semicolon; and Mr. John Paget justifies the suppression.

It is by such arguments and such misquotations that these two writers have attempted to impugn the trustworthiness of Lord Macaulay's History; but if his delineation of Penn is to be made the test, no intelligent and fair-minded person can hesitate to admit that his reputation as an accurate and trustworthy writer has not yet been shaken. In respect to every one of the points named, he has satisfactorily vindicated himself in his additional notes; and though his account of Penn is very strongly colored, there is as yet no reason to doubt that it presents a correct portrait, warranted by well-authenticated facts.

Next in magnitude is the charge that he has deliberately falsified history in his account of John Churchill, Duke of Marlborough. But the arguments adduced in support of this charge are even weaker than those urged in support of the accusation relative to his account of William Penn. For instance, Lord Macaulay says that Marlborough's "education had been so much neglected that he could not spell the most common words of his own language; but his acute and vigorous understanding amply supplied the place of book-learning." Mr. John Paget, who refers to this passage in support of some of his strictures on Lord Macaulay's History, does not venture to meet the statement by an explicit denial; but he does venture to assert, by way of a reply, that "it is sufficient to observe, that he [Marlborough] was educated at St. Paul's school, and that his despatches show that, at any rate, he was a proficient in Latin, French, and English composition." Now,

if the writer meant anything by this language, he meant that his readers should draw from it an inference unfavorable to Lord Macaulay's veracity. Against every such inference we set the positive testimony of a witness who is above suspicion. In one of his letters to his son, Lord Chesterfield writes, that he knew the Duke of Marlborough "extremely well," and that "he was eminently illiterate, wrote bad English, and spelled it still worse." Again : Lord Macaulay has described, in one of his most brilliant paragraphs, that insatiable avarice which every one knows was the predominant trait in Marlborough's character. In order to weaken the force of this description, we are reminded that Marlborough when a young man married a poor girl, and that through life he cherished for her a fervent affection. But surely it needs very little familiarity with human nature to teach us that love is often a stronger passion than avarice, and that not a few embryo misers have married penniless girls. Equally in vain and aside from the real question is it to repeat, as proofs of "disinterestedness and generosity, public and private," that Marlborough declined, "when in poverty and disgrace, to accept of the generosity of the Princess Anne," that he refused "the government of the Netherlands, with its princely income of £ 60,000 a year," that he was generous to "young and deserving officers," that he gave money to "the wounded officers of the enemy after the battle of Malplaquet," and that he provided "during his own lifetime for his children." He may have done all this, and still have been parsimonious and have loved money more than he loved pleasure or honor ; for there is nothing in these alleged proofs of "disinterestedness and generosity" which is incompatible with such a disposition. His refusal to accept of pecuniary assistance from the Princess Anne really shows a regard for his own interests, rather than a spirit of self-sacrifice. The rupture between Mary and her sister had been occasioned by the injudicious advice given to the latter by the Churchills ; and their own disgrace had been the penalty. If Marlborough, under these circumstances, had become a pensioner on Anne, he would have still further incensed the government which it was his interest to conciliate, while he could have gained only a paltry sum. Moreover,

the exhibition of so rapacious a temper would have afforded to his enemies a welcome theme of remark, which they would have known how to use in the event of Anne's succeeding to the throne, even if an estrangement did not sooner occur between Anne and her friend. Again : Marlborough's refusal to accept the government of the Netherlands was owing to the strenuous opposition of the Dutch, and Marlborough was too sagacious to undertake the government of the Provinces in the face of such formidable obstacles as their opposition would have created. His provision for his children was not liberal in the ordinary acceptation of the term, and was more than equalled by the generosity of Anne toward them, both before and after she came to the throne. His private charities were inconsiderable in amount, as even his biographer, Archdeacon Coxe, admits, though for many years he possessed an immense annual income, and at his death left an estate of more than a million and a half pounds sterling.

In regard to only one point has any argument deserving serious notice been brought forward, and even in this instance a careful consideration of the subject will show that Marlborough's conduct admits of no defence. We refer to his treachery in informing the French government of the intended expedition against Brest. The circumstances connected with this nefarious transaction have long been known to every one who has studied this period of history, and the only difference between Lord Macaulay's account of it and the narratives of other historians is in the greater dramatic power shown in the former. A brief recital of the chief circumstances is therefore all that is necessary here. In the spring of 1694, while England was at war with France, preparations were made by William for a combined military and naval expedition, the destination of which was kept a profound secret. "The design, and the preparations for it," says Bishop Burnet, "were kept so secret, that there was not the least suspicion of the project, till the hiring transport ships discovered it." This account is confirmed by a despatch from L'Hermitage, dated May 15-25, in which, after alluding to various rumors as to the design of the expedition, the writer adds: "*De tous ces divers projets qu'on s'imagine aucun n'est venu à la cognois-*

sance du public." At length Marlborough discovered the important secret, and, with a baseness which it is difficult to characterize in too severe language, he immediately wrote to James, revealing to him the whole plan so far as he was informed of it. His letter states that he had been for some time endeavoring to ascertain the design of the expedition, and that he had but just learned the facts which he now communicated. His letter was sent to James under cover of one from Colonel Sackville, a Jacobite agent in England, to Lord Melfort, James's principal adviser, in which Sackville vouches for the importance of the information in words that show very clearly how well the secret had been kept. "I send it by an express," he writes, "judging it to be of the utmost consequence for the service of the king, my master, and consequently for the service of his Most Christian Majesty." The intelligence was communicated at once to the French government; and, as the English fleet was delayed nearly a month by adverse gales, ample time was afforded for erecting batteries at every available point, and for gathering a large army at Brest. When the English fleet appeared in Camaret Bay, near the mouth of the harbor, they found the coast bristling with cannon. Nevertheless an attack was made, which resulted in the death of General Talmash. About eight hundred of his men were also killed or mortally wounded. At a very early period the failure of this expedition and the death of its gallant leader appear to have been ascribed to treachery. But, as the historian remarks, "the real criminal was not named; nor, till the archives of the House of Stuart were explored, was it known to the public that Talmash had perished by the basest of all the hundred villainies of Marlborough."

Various attempts have been made to palliate the conduct of Marlborough in making this communication to the enemy, but without success. No human ingenuity can alter the character of such a transaction, or make it appear less villainous than it has been almost universally considered. Coxe, who must have consulted the original documents, could find no better way of defending Marlborough than by suggesting that he was guilty of a double treachery. "From the time and circumstances of the communication," he says, "we are in-

clined to regard it in no other light than as one of the various expedients adopted by Marlborough and others to regain the good-will of their former sovereign, that their demerits might be overlooked in the event of a restoration." In other words, we are to infer that Marlborough kept back the information until he knew that it was too late to be of any worth, and that then he communicated it to James, so that in any event he might be in favor with the successful party. "But this," as Lord Stanhope justly remarks, in his strictures on Marlborough's treachery, "would only be a further refinement of perfidy." With the same purpose of shielding Marlborough, it has been asserted that the news was unimportant, because it was previously known to the French court; but we have already shown that the real destination of the fleet had been kept a close secret; and even if the French government had surmised from any circumstance in the early history of the war, or had learned through the treachery of some other person, that the expedition known to be fitting out at Portsmouth was intended to operate against Brest, it would not affect the character of Marlborough's letter, or render his conduct less deserving of the severest censure. The fact would still remain, that he betrayed the secrets of his own government to an enemy; and it is scarcely worth while to discuss such secondary questions as whether Talmash's death was occasioned by Marlborough's treachery, by the treachery of Godolphin or of some one else, or by the prudence and forethought of the French government, already prepared for the emergency, but animated to fresh exertions by Marlborough's letter.

Another celebrated person whose character has been painted in very dark colors by Lord Macaulay is John Grahame of Claverhouse, Viscount Dundee, next to Montrose the most distinguished leader of the Scotch Cavaliers. Dundee, was bold, enterprising, and courageous, as well as cruel, vindictive, and headstrong; and by his contemporaries he was variously regarded according to the political predilections which each person cherished. These diversities of judgment have descended to our own time, and even now the romantic devotion which he exhibited for the cause of the fallen Stuarts

finds many admirers. It is not surprising, therefore, that several Scotch writers of Tory proclivities should have attempted to discredit Lord Macaulay's representation, and to gloss over the severities committed by Dundee. Their strictures, however, have been mainly confined to a single point, Lord Macaulay's account of the murder of John Brown, "the Christian Carrier." For the details of this transaction he relies for the most part on Wodrow, the great authority for the history of the Covenanters at this period, though he appears to have drawn one or two facts from other sources. In no important particular does his account differ from that given by Wodrow; and we may add, that Wodrow's account differs but little from the narrative published a few years afterward by Patrick Walker, while it is also confirmed in part by Dundee's own statement. The only material discrepancy between Wodrow and Walker is in respect to the personal agency of Dundee in Brown's death. The former says, that Claverhouse, "in a fret, shot him with his own hand." Walker, on the contrary, says only that "Claverhouse ordered six soldiers to shoot him," and leaves us to infer that this order was executed. Lord Macaulay's attention was called to this discrepancy by Mr. Aytoun as early as 1849 or 1850, but he does not appear to have attached any importance to it. He made no change in the text of his History; nor did he refer to the subject in the additional notes inserted in the edition of 1858, though he adopted several of Mr. Aytoun's corrections in other parts of the History. Moreover, Wodrow's narrative was extensively circulated among his friends in manuscript before its publication, and it is scarcely probable that any important error would have escaped notice. For this reason, among others, we are inclined to think that Lord Macaulay was justified in adhering to Wodrow's statement. It is also worthy of remark, that Walker was personally hostile to Wodrow, and would gladly have contradicted him if he could. His failure to contradict him, except in regard to one incident, must therefore be considered as a strong confirmation of the truth of Wodrow's narrative. Yet one critic, Mr. Aytoun, endeavors to soften down the character of this dastardly murder by calling it a "military execution," and even goes

so far as to hazard the opinion that Dundee "was not present at the execution of John Brown." Since Mr. Aytoun's criticism was printed, however, Dundee's original despatch to the Duke of Queensberry has been brought to light, and forever sets this supposition at rest. "On Friday last," he writes, "amongst the hills betwixt Douglas and the Ploughlands, we pursued two fellows a great way through the mosses, and in the end seized them. They had no arms about them, and denied they had any. But being asked if they would take the abjuration, the eldest of the two, called John Brown, refused it; nor would he swear not to rise in arms against the king, but said he knew no king. Upon which, and there being found bullets and match in his house, and treasonable papers, I caused shoot him dead; which he suffered very unconcernedly." Another writer, Mr. Paget, attempts to palliate Dundee's conduct by blackening Brown's character, and by repeating Mr. Aytoun's phrase, that it was "simply a military execution." He asserts that Brown's "peaceableness was shown by his being in arms at Bothwell; his piety, by shouting, 'No quarter for the enemies of the Covenant,'—by rallying round the gibbet and the ropes prepared for the 'bloody militiamen and malignant troopers,' over whom the Lord would have given them an easy victory, but for their 'stepping aside' in sparing the five 'brats of Babel' at Drumclog,—and by providing a secure hiding-place for men and arms to be used for future slaughter." We have not been able to discover on what authority these aspersions are based, unless they are to be inferred from an ambiguous expression in Dundee's despatch. Dundee is writing of a conversation held with Brown's nephew after the poor man's death, and, after giving some details, he adds: "In the time he was making this confession the soldiers found out a house in the hill, under ground, that could hold a dozen of men, and there were swords and pistols in it; and this fellow declared that they belonged to his uncle, and that he had lurked in that place ever since Bothwell, where he was in arms. He confessed that he had a halberd, and told who gave it him about a month ago, and we have the fellow prisoner." From the careless use of the pronoun "he" in this passage, it is impossible

to determine who was in arms at Bothwell, John Brown or "his nephew," though the most obvious reference would seem to be to the latter; and there is certainly no evidence that the "swords and pistols" were designed for any other purpose than self-defence. But, even if this alleged confession of the nephew is to be regarded as affording evidence that John Brown was at Bothwell, it affords no justification of Dundee, who learned the fact only after Brown had been shot.

It has also been alleged that Lord Macaulay has caricatured the Highlanders, and that the celebrated description of them in the third volume has no real foundation; but the attempt to substantiate this charge has signally failed. No honest opponent pretends that he has drawn on his imagination for his facts, or that he has misquoted his authorities. It has been asserted, however, that these authorities are Cockneys, and that they were so prejudiced as to be unable to give a trustworthy description of a wild and uncultivated country like Scotland. But it is necessary merely to observe, that they describe only what they themselves saw, and that there is nothing intrinsically improbable in their statements. Rude tribes, as the Highland clans were in the seventeenth century, are likely to exhibit precisely those characteristics which are here ascribed to the Highlanders; and even at a comparatively recent period the lower classes of the Scotch bore such a resemblance to Lord Macaulay's sketch as to show that the picture is but little exaggerated, even if it is not, as we believe that it is, abundantly confirmed in every important particular. Yet Mr. John Paget, at once the weakest and the most unscrupulous of Lord Macaulay's critics, does not hesitate to call it a "malignant lampoon," and to speak of it as "this gross caricature, this shameless libel, this malignant slander, this parrioidal onslaught by a son of the Highlands on the people and the land of his fathers." *

* We must give one more instance of Mr. Paget's dishonesty. Lord Macaulay, in speaking of the "Northern Memoirs" of Richard Franck, says: "Five or six years after the Revolution an indefatigable angler published an account of Scotland." On this, Mr. John Paget asserts that Lord Macaulay is "wrong as to the date," and proceeds to say: "The book was written in 1658, thirty years before the Revolution, instead of six years after." The remark is utterly irrelevant. Lord Macaulay says nothing about the time when the book was written: he merely says that it was published in 1694, and his statement is correct.

The next charge which we propose to examine also relates to his treatment of Scotch history, and proceeds from a party directly at issue with the admirers of Dundee and the Highlanders. By the Scotch Presbyterians it has been asserted that he has done great injustice to the Covenanters; but this complaint is against the whole coloring of his narrative, rather than against particular statements. There are, however, two or three points in Hugh Miller's criticism which are worthy of a passing notice. For instance, Lord Macaulay says that the Western Covenanters "had never heard any achievement in the history of their own country more warmly praised by their favorite teachers than the butchery of Cardinal Beaton and of Archbishop Sharpe." This, the critic tells us, is "simply untrue." How far it is "untrue" may be inferred from a single extract from the writings of Alexander Shields, chaplain of the Cameronian regiment. Speaking of the murder of Sharpe, he says, in the "Hind Let Loose," that the Archbishop "received the just demerit of his perfidy, apostasy, sorceries, villanies, and murders,—sharp arrows of the mighty and coals of juniper. For upon the 3d of May, 1679, several worthy gentlemen, with some other men of courage and zeal for the cause of God and the good of the country, executed righteous judgment upon him in Magus Muir, near St. Andrews."

Again: the writer takes exception to the account of the trial and execution of Thomas Aikenhead for blasphemy; but a comparison of Lord Macaulay's statement, Miller's own narrative, and the authorities quoted by the former, shows how little reason there is to complain of the language of the historian. It is impossible to gloss over the transaction, or to show that it was anything but a judicial murder; and Lord Macaulay's assertion, that the ministers, "even from their pulpits, cried out for cutting him off," is fully sustained by a letter printed in the appendix to Aikenhead's trial in the thirteenth volume of Howell's "State Trials," in which nearly the same words occur.* A third objection which Mr. Miller

* Allusion is apparently made to Hugh Miller's criticism in a note which Lord Macaulay added to the edition of his History published in 1858. He says: "Some idle and dishonest objections which have been made to this part of my narrative have been triumphantly refuted in a little tract entitled 'Thomas Aikenhead,' by Mr. John Gordon." We have not seen this tract; but any discussion of a point which is in itself so clear seems quite unnecessary.

prefers against Lord Macaulay's treatment of the Scotch Covenanters is based on the language employed by the historian in describing the feelings of the Established Church in England toward the Presbyterians at the period of the debates on the Comprehension Bill. If Lord Macaulay entertained the opinions which he thus ascribes to the Episcopalians, the criticism would be perfectly just, and by some unexplained process of reasoning the critic appears to have satisfied himself that such was the fact. But no one who is familiar with the History will agree with him. The whole structure of the passages referred to shows that the historian is merely recording in his own language the opinions and arguments of the persons whom he is describing; and it is utterly absurd to hold an historian responsible for the correctness of opinions thus expressed. All that we have a right to demand of him is that he shall state those opinions faithfully. This Lord Macaulay has certainly done; and there is no part of his History more admirably executed than are those portions in which he describes the feelings of the various parties in church and state, whether he sympathizes with them or not.

The Scotch Presbyterians, however, are not alone in their complaints as to the manner in which Lord Macaulay has described the religious teachers of the last half of the seventeenth century. Immediately on the appearance of his first two volumes he was charged with having drawn a false and distorted picture of the character and social position of the rural clergy of the Church of England in the reign of Charles II.; and for some time this celebrated description afforded a favorite theme for the strictures of unfriendly critics. But the charges based on it are now generally given up as untenable; and we suppose that there are few intelligent and candid readers who do not admit the accuracy of his representation. Within the last ten years much evidence has come to light, showing that even at a period within the memory of persons still living many of the rural clergy were men of extreme ignorance, in no respect superior to their parishioners, and with stipends entirely insufficient for their support. Lord Macaulay was the first to call attention to facts which are now well known; and the real merit of this part of his His-

tory consists quite as much in the novelty of his statements, as in the consummate skill with which he has arranged his materials.*

From the same class of persons by which this complaint was urged we have another charge, that Lord Macaulay has misunderstood and misrepresented the character of Cranmer and of the founders of the Church of England. In reference to the first part of this allegation, it will be sufficient to quote the admission of Dr. Philpotts, Bishop of Exeter, one of the most inflexible Churchmen in England. "Of Cranmer himself," he says, in his first letter to the historian, "I am not much disposed to quarrel with your character, severe as it is." The second part of the charge is not based on any alleged misstatement of facts, and relates merely to matters of opinion. It formed the principal topic in the series of letters addressed by the Bishop of Exeter to Lord Macaulay, in January, 1849, and recently published in a pamphlet; and as the Bishop expressly says that he believes Lord Macaulay is "incapable of making an illusory quotation," it is not surprising that the subject should be left very much as it was at the beginning of the correspondence. The charge turns on the interpretation to be placed on certain printed documents and on the intention of the founders of the Church in certain well-known proceedings. The only concession made by either writer is contained in the first paragraph of Lord Macaulay's second letter. "Before another edition of my book appears, I shall have time to weigh your observations carefully, and to examine the works to which you have called my attention. You have convinced me of the propriety of making some alterations. But I hope that you will not accuse me of per-

* Since we began this article we have accidentally met with some additional testimony which confirms the accuracy of Lord Macaulay's description, and is worthy of a passing reference. In the third volume of Mrs. Delany's Correspondence is an account of a country clergyman of the Established Church, who, even in the middle of the last century, had an annual income of less than one hundred dollars, and who seems to have been in most respects in as low a social position as any of the men painted by the historian. In the Introductory Chapter of the Second Series of Dean Ramsay's "Reminiscences of Scottish Life and Character," that gentleman describes, from personal recollection, an English clergyman who might almost have sat for the portrait in Lord Macaulay's third chapter.

tinacity if I add, that, as far as I can at present judge, those alterations will be slight, and that, on the great points at issue, my opinion is unchanged." The result of the correspondence is precisely what might have been anticipated; and we do not believe that the opinions of any person who was previously acquainted with the subject will be much affected either by Lord Macaulay's statements or by the Bishop's strictures on them. It would seem, indeed, from a comparison of the passages in the first edition of the History, on which Dr. Philpotts based his objections, with the corresponding paragraphs in the fourth edition and in the edition of 1858, that a more careful consideration of the subject confirmed Lord Macaulay's opinions, rather than weakened them. In each of the two later editions to which we have referred, there are a few verbal corrections; but not one of them indicates a change of opinion as to the facts narrated, or as to the significance of those facts. We need scarcely add, that we entirely concur in the views expressed by Lord Macaulay at the outset.

The only remaining charge worthy of notice is based on his remarks relative to William's connection with the massacre of Glencoe, and on an alleged inclination on his part to deal gently with the king's faults and vices. To his account of the transactions in the valley of Glencoe no just exception can be taken. He has painted all the horrors of that atrocious crime in colors that will endure as long as any narrative in the English language shall convey an intelligible meaning to the reader. And he has not attempted to shield the Master of Stair, Breadalbane, and Argyle, nor any of their subordinate agents, from the severe judgment which their infamy invites. This praise no honest reader or critic will withhold from Lord Macaulay's narrative. But in one important particular we cannot follow him with satisfaction. While he has spoken of those who planned and executed this nefarious plot in terms which need no qualification, he has labored to lessen the responsibility justly attached to William, by whose authority they did everything. There is not a particle of evidence, indeed, that William knew, when he signed Dalrymple's order, that MacIan had taken the oath; and he must therefore be held innocent of that thirst for blood which Dalrymple exhib-

ited in not recognizing the validity of MacI'an's submission. But we entertain no doubt that he fully understood the purport of the order presented for his signature, and that he attached a very different meaning to the word "extirpate" from that which Lord Macaulay endeavors to import into it. Ignorance of Dalrymple's intentions cannot, we think, be imputed to William; and even if it could be, it would afford no justification of his share in this transaction. Dalrymple devised the plan, and gave the necessary orders for its execution; but still it must be conceded that he could have done nothing without William's sanction. To these considerations Lord Macaulay does not appear to have given sufficient weight, and his arguments are less satisfactory here than in any other part of his History.

Beside this objection to the historian's treatment of these memorable events, Mr. Paget has brought forward several dishonest and frivolous objections to different parts of the narrative. To the former class belong all, or nearly all, his strictures on the alleged mistakes of Lord Macaulay; and in the latter must be included much the larger part of his remaining criticisms. For instance, in referring to Mrs. Grant's "Letters from the Mountains," Lord Macaulay writes: "I quote Mrs. Grant's authority only for what she herself heard and saw. Her account of the massacre was written, apparently, without the assistance of books, and is grossly incorrect. Indeed, she makes a mistake of two years as to the date." On this Mr. Paget remarks, with characteristic effrontery: "Her mistake as to time, which Lord Macaulay condemns so harshly, is a mistake of six weeks, — not, as he asserts, of two years." The truth is, her mistake is a mistake of more than two years. In a letter to Miss Reid, dated May 17, 1773, which is the letter referred to, she writes: "In the year 1694, or later, it was required, that all heads of tribes, in that district, should take the oaths to government at Inverary." And a few lines farther on, in describing the quartering of the soldiers among the clansmen, she writes: "This happened in the joyous days of Christmas, when it is, if ever, that these people have plenty and good cheer." The date given by Mrs. Grant is certainly not earlier than Christmas, 1694: the true date of the mas-

sacre is February 13, 1692. Again, Mr. Paget distinctly denies that Dalrymple was unfriendly to schemes of reconciliation; and without doubt there are several passages in his published letters in which he makes loud professions of moderation. But there is abundant evidence under his own hand to show that he was strongly disposed to "root out" some of the clans; and in the face of this evidence it is impossible to deny or doubt the accuracy of Lord Macaulay's representation. But it is not worth the labor to track Mr. Paget through all his mistakes and misrepresentations, and we have already given a sufficient number of instances to show the worthlessness of his criticisms.

That Lord Macaulay has fallen into some mistakes as to matters of fact will be readily conceded, even by his warmest admirers; but his mistakes are neither numerous nor important. Some slight errors of detail, indeed, were discovered on the first appearance of the work, and are corrected in the later editions; but not one of them affects his trustworthiness as an historian. In respect to the principal charges brought against him, it is to be observed that there is not one which will bear the test of a critical examination, or which does not relate to mere matters of opinion on questions always warmly debated. His volumes have been subjected to the severest criticism which personal and party hostility can inspire, and the fact that no important error has been discovered affords the strongest ground for a belief in his accuracy of statement and his fidelity in the discharge of his duties as an historian.

No attempt, we may add, has been made to refute the general judgment pronounced by him as to the character of the men and the measures that pass in review before him; and this after all is the real test of his merits. A mousing criticism may detect an error in spelling a name in one place, or in recording a date in another; but these defects are readily corrected, and do not often affect the substance of the narrative. If criticism stops here, and can take no just exception to the soundness of the views presented, and to the general coloring of the narrative, an historian need have little fear as to the permanent reputation of his work. We are led to remark, therefore, that among the chief merits of Lord Ma-

caulay's History is to be placed the soundness of his views on all the great questions which must be discussed in any history of the Revolution of 1688 and the period immediately following it. He has performed the service which Mackintosh and Fox attempted, but did not live to accomplish; and he has dissipated forever the false lights which Hume's sophistries had gathered around the Stuarts. The history of that period has never been narrated with such skill, and never before has its real character been more truly and more justly represented.

The question is sometimes asked, whether Lord Macaulay is greater in his History or in his Essays; and this question may at the first sight appear to present some difficulties. But these difficulties are more apparent than real. His Essays are without doubt the finest productions of the kind in our language, and no one can read them without admiration of the writer's vast learning, the force of his reason, the brilliancy of his imagination, and the magnificent sweep of his style. The best of his Essays will, it is probable, be always read; and no subsequent writer can hope to surpass by any similar effort the papers on Warren Hastings, on Clive, on Addison, on Lord Chatham, and on the younger Pitt. But the historian has to paint a broader picture, to deal with more complicated relations, to illustrate a wider range of topics, and to exhibit the connection of cause and effect through a much longer period, than can properly come within the province of the essayist. A higher order of ability is therefore requisite in a great historian than in a great essayist; and the writer who composes a history of permanent interest and worth will maintain a higher place in literature than the most successful essayist. That Lord Macaulay has written such a history admits of no doubt. The "History of England" exhibits the best qualities of his Essays in their mature development, and it adds to them an equally satisfactory exhibition of those other qualities for which there is no room in an essay, but which give character to a history. English literature would have wanted some of its richest treasures if Lord Macaulay's Essays had not been written; but the loss would have been far greater if his theory of historic excellence had

not found expression in the History, the last and grandest production of his transcendent genius.

If we compare him with the most eminent of those who before his time had acquired distinction in the historical literature of England, — with Hume, Gibbon, Robertson, and Hallam, — we shall find that he was not less philosophical in his disquisitions, while he was far more trustworthy in his narrative, than the first; that he was not less learned and accurate, while he was far more impartial, than the second; that his style is not less luminous, while it is far more animated and picturesque, than that of the third; and that he was not less judicious in the formation of his opinions, while he was far more eloquent in the statement of them, than the last. If we compare him with Grote, the greatest of his living contemporaries in England, we shall find that he had studied his authorities with equal diligence, and that he brought to the investigation of his subject powers of analysis equally great, while he was far less under the influence of preconceived opinions. Among the German historians, many rival him in depth and variety of information; but not one of them possesses such plastic power of imagination, or can fuse his materials into a narrative so lucid and so full of interest. In France we have the great names of Sismondi, Michelet, Henri Martin, Guizot, and Thiers, with whom he may be justly compared. But in spite of the manifold excellences of Sismondi, few persons now read his voluminous pages; Michelet's glowing narrative always charms and fascinates, while his arguments often fail to convince, and his readers are seldom converted to the views which he propounds with such wonderful brilliancy; Henri Martin's great work is a production of much learning and ability, and has obtained a high degree of popularity, but, like many French histories, it is written to illustrate and defend a particular theory, and some parts of it are open to severe criticism; of Guizot's profound and various erudition, of his candor, and of his immense services to historical literature, we can never speak except in terms of admiration, but he was deficient in brilliancy and animation, and his place among French historians is precisely the same as that which Hallam occupies in English literature; on the other hand,

Thiers is an eloquent advocate, and though his books are read with pleasure, their partisan tone is too obvious for them ever to hold the first rank. Certainly not one of these great writers is at once so learned, so trustworthy, and so brilliant as the author of the "History of England." On this side of the Atlantic, two names will at once occur to every one as altogether worthy to be named in this connection,—Prescott and Motley. If we compare Mr. Prescott's last and greatest work with Lord Macaulay's History, it will be readily admitted that the "History of the Reign of Philip II." is the more interesting fragment of the two; but we miss in it those profound discussions for which Lord Macaulay was so admirably qualified by his various experience in public life, and it does not exhibit that boundless wealth of information on every conceivable topic which we find in the more voluminous work of the great English historian. Mr. Motley's earlier volumes were much inferior to his last two; and we must await the completion of his labors before pronouncing a judgment as to the comparative rank of a writer, who, while still a young man, has achieved a reputation so solid and so brilliant, and whose future is richer with promise than is that of any other living historian. We may observe now, however, that he has prosecuted his inquiries as diligently and faithfully as Lord Macaulay, and has sought to establish the truth of history with an equal devotion; but he often suffers his judgment to be biassed by his sympathies, and his style has not yet acquired that ease and dignity of movement which no historian can safely neglect.

From this rapid comparison of Lord Macaulay with the most eminent modern historians, we are irresistibly led to the conclusion, that in a certain rare combination of qualities of the first importance to an historian he is superior to them all. By the original structure of his mind he was pre-eminently qualified to become a great historian; and his early studies, not less than the public duties of more mature years, were singularly suited to create and nourish the habits of mind which are indispensable to the formation of such a character.